

October is Timber Time – Squirrel Hunters Encouraged to Try Turkey Hunting

Squirrel hunting activity is picking up with more hunters heading to the timber as the cool air of October begins to settle in over Iowa.

Hunting opportunities for squirrels are excellent because hunting pressure is low. With little competition in the timber, squirrel hunters may want to purchase a turkey license and give fall turkey hunting a try.

Fall turkey seasons are often passed over while hunters pursue deer, ducks and pheasants, but it provides a good opportunity to bring novice hunters or youth into the sport because being noisy is one of the ways to hunt them.

“The most productive way to hunt turkeys in the fall is to find a flock, break them up by either running at them, or sending the dog in or let the kids run at them. The key is to get the birds flying in as many different directions as possible,” said Jim Coffey, forest wildlife technician with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

“Turkeys are flocking birds so they will want to get back into a flock. Once they are dispersed, get the camo on, sit down, wait a few minutes and then begin to call them back,” he said.

But leave most of the spring calls at home. Calling in the fall is different than in the spring.

“It sounds like ‘kee-kee’ and you can mimic the call with a diaphragm mouth call to bring them in. It’s pretty exciting,” he said.

The fall season is long which allows hunters some flexibility and helps with taking kids because there is time to find flocks and you can go when the weather is nicer when the kids have off from school, Coffey said.

Fall turkey hunting has similar shotgun and bow hunting regulations, with the exception that in the fall, hunters may harvest a bird of either sex. In the spring, it’s bearded bird only. Rifles and muzzleloading rifles are not allowed and shotguns must be between 10-gauge to 20-gauge. Bow hunters are under the same broad-head restrictions for turkey as they are for deer.

Harvest must be reported through the harvest reporting system by midnight of the day the bird is recovered.